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ABSTRACT

The school library is very important in developing a quality reading program. The library books and other reading materials need to be varied and on various levels of reading complexity so that students can read meaningfully without facing failure in word recognition and comprehension of ideas. This paper discusses school libraries and their various functions. The paper explains that sustained silent reading and individualized reading programs can be held in the school library and that technology has contributions to make as a library resource in a plethora of ways. It finds that schools are increasingly using technology to improve student reading and study habits. The paper suggests that the local school conduct research to ascertain whether the library is being used by students to obtain necessary information in answer to problems and questions in reading. It advocates rating the library in a questionnaire for students and teachers and then evaluating the results to study the library's strengths and weaknesses; student interviews may also be conducted to ascertain the kinds of library services desired to improve reading habits. The paper also discusses conducting workshops for improving library services, holding faculty meetings to establish objectives for library use, encouraging students to take library books home for reading, developing a community of readers which includes library supporters, and creating activities this community of readers may engage in. (NKA)

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Reading and the Classroom Library.

by Marlow Ediger

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READING AND THE CLASSROOM LIBRARY

The school library is very important in developing a quality reading program. If pupils are to become good readers, then appropriate reading materials need to be available. Diverse kinds of materials need to be readily in the offing for learner choice. The library books and other reading materials need to be on a variety of genera. This assists to provide for different interests which individual pupils may have when choosing what to read. Also, the library books, among other instructional materials, must be on various levels of reading complexity so that a pupil may select that which he/she can read in a meaningful manner without facing failure in word recognition and comprehension of ideas. There are ample possibilities for pupils to choose from and to engage in voluntary reading as well as use materials to read across the curriculum.

Pupils need to spend time to browse in the library. Browsing helps pupils to become interested in reading and make selections on what to read. Motivation for reading might then be furthered. Sometimes voluntary reading makes for the best kind of motivation for reading. The pupil there is in command of making choices and decisions on subject matter and content to read (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Eight).

Sustained Silent Reading and the School Library

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) can be held in the school library. In SSR, everyone selects a library book to read. The duration of time for reading then needs to be decided upon. With self selection of books, the reader should choose that which is interesting and on is on his/her own reading level. The teacher is included in choosing and reading to the self in SSR. In some schools, the principal, teachers, support personnel, and the custodians are all engaged in SSR. This is excellent since pupils then perceive adult role models for emulation in reading (See Manning and Manning, 1984, 375-380).

SSR emphasizes that pupils do more reading and then practice skills achieved in the classroom curriculum. Word recognition and different kinds of comprehension skills may then be practiced in SSR. Recommendations for reading may come from peers, the teacher, and the librarian. The writer has known school principals who are well versed in children's literature and suggest books for pupils to read. He has also been acquainted when supervising student teachers in the public schools of cooperating teachers who are highly knowledgeable of

children's literature and have conducted workshops in this area in neighboring schools. Thus, cooperating teachers can make good suggestions to pupils in terms of what to read in children's literature. The point is that pupils need to be encouraged to read and do more reading. When reading an increased number of library books, the pupil is able to read at a more complex level and build background information to read other books. Use of technology can assist in locating authors and illustrators of children's literature on Web sites such as the following: http//www.acs.ucalgary.cal-dkbrown/authors.

Individualized Reading and the School Library

Individualized reading may be thought of as a program of instruction to replace basal readers. With individualized reading, the pupil chooses a library book, from among others to read. The learner is the chooser. After the completion of reading the book, a conference is held with the classroom teacher to appraise comprehension. The teacher as well as the learner raise questions and provide answers covering content read. He/she might then assess pupil comprehension in reading. The pupil may select a section to read aloud to the teacher to check word recognition progress. The teacher records and dates items from the conference. He/she makes comparisons with future conferences to notice achievement in reading (See Tiedt, 1983, Chapter Twelve).

Second, individualized reading may also be extremely informal whereby the pupil selects a library book to read during spare time in school as well as in the home setting. The evaluation used here may consist of teacher observation to notice what has been read sequentially by the pupil in school. The teacher might also observe what the pupil brings to class during discussions dealing with library book information acquired. Interest and effort in reading is noticed in a very flexible way. The pupil continually seeks, selects, and reads sequential library books from the school library.

Third, within a small group, peers may choose sequential library books to read. These books will generally be multiple copies of a paperback. Interesting self chosen questions may be discussed. The peer performance may be video taped and self assessment may then be in the offing. The peer group will have three or four members. Dyads might also choose to read the same library book and the two involved may interact in discussing the contents.

The goal in individualized reading is for the reader to

become motivated to do more reading in an informal approach whereby self selection of reading materials is optimized. Pupils should encourage each other to read as many library books as possible when individualized reading is in evidence. Vocabulary development through reading is also emphasized (See Nagy, et. al. (1984, 237-270).

Using Technology in the Library Setting

Technology has its contributions to make as a library resource in a plethora of ways. Thus, the pupil with teacher guidance may

1. work on a research project, individually or collaboratively, when gathering information to solve and identified problem. The problem chosen and clearly defined can, in part, be solved through information gathered from the internet or world wide web.
2. read current events items from internet. The news then is up-to-date and needs to be analyzed by learners to the best possible based on current pupil levels of achievement.
3. surf the internet to notice items of interest to read. Criteria for quality ideas to be gleaned from reading need to be assessed in small groups within a sharing session.
4. read entrees from an encyclopedia on CD ROM. The entrees may be read for enjoyment or to be used to obtain needed answers to a question.
5. think critically and creatively pertaining to information gleaned from technology. The information may be compared and contrasted with what was read from a basal textbook.

Schools are increasingly using technology to improve pupil reading and study habits. Technology content needs to encourage pupil achievement in all curriculum areas. The subject matter therein needs to engage pupils actively in learning. Purpose for learning must be inherent in using technology to secure information. Information needs to be assessed in terms of desired criteria. The information needs to be shared with peers and in discussions with teacher guidance. Worthwhile study habits need to be developed. For information on best sellers in children's literature, the following Web site might well be helpful: Amazon.com http://www.Amazan.com/

Research in Library Use Effectiveness

The local school needs to conduct research to notice how well the library is being used by pupils to obtain necessary information in answer to problems and questions in reading There are a plethora of ways to assess the quality of a library. A questionnaire may be completed by pupils and teachers to notice the friendliness of the librarian in providing services to enhance learning in the school setting. For example on a five point scale, the raters may respond to items such as the following:

1. The librarian is helpful in suggesting library books to read.
2. The librarian reads aloud in an effective manner to pupils during arranged story time sessions.
3. The library contains an adequate number of library books which are of interest for reading.

Results from the survey need to be analyzed and studied to notice strengths and weaknesses in its services and offerings provided. The major objective to be stressed pertains to the library providing necessary means for pupils to increase reading skills.

Further research projects may emphasize an experimental study with a new treatment versus traditional procedure of providing library services to learners. It is good if the following criteria can be met in doing the study:

1. random sampling of numbers for both the treatment and the control group.
2. a pretest and a post test be used.
3. the measurement device for number two, should have high validity and reliability.
4. a longitudinal study needs to be in evidence.
5. the treatment should pinpoint if the new approach is better than the traditional procedure in offering library services.

Interviews may also be conducted of pupils to notice the kinds of library services desired to improve reading habits. Questions should be determined prior to the interview as well as emerge as the need arises. From research completed, teachers and the school principal may decide changes which need to be made to increase library use and to help pupils in meeting instructional objectives in reading. (See Vermette et. al., 2001, 87-93).

Workshops for Improving Library Services

Workshops need to be conducted to help librarians, teachers, and the school principal offer improved services to aid pupil achievement in reading. Among others, the workshop might well include topics such as the following:

1. how to meet personal needs of pupils and teachers in using library resources.
2. how to shelve library materials to assist users to obtain what is needed.
3. how to make the library attractive so that an inward desire is there to use reading materials, such as having appealing bulletin board displays which attract pupil attention.

The workshop needs to have definite objectives for achievement, carefully thought through. Modification and increasing/deleting the number of objectives must be possible as the need arises. There should be a large group session for clarification purposes of the workshop, committee and collaborative endeavors based on problems identified in the large group session, as well as individual projects for participants to pursue. Participants have needs to be met as a result of workshop participation to improve library services and reading achievement (Ediger, 2000, 30-37).

Faculty Meetings and the Library

Faculty meetings can be a good way to establish objectives for library use. The writer, when supervising student teachers in the public schools, observed a faculty meeting whereby participants brain stormed ideas pertaining to school library use. Creativity was certainly in evidence as participants emphasized the following:

1. generated ideas for library improvement.
2. respected each idea presented. Value judgments were not made on any one idea in order to encourage the free flow of suggestions by participants.
3. recorded ideas for all to see so that duplication did not occur.
4. summarized ideas given by joining together those which were highly related.
5. provided a framework for the next faculty meeting designed to stress implementation and feedback of those ideas deemed worthwhile.

The faculty meeting provided a framework for objectives to emphasize in school library use (Ediger, 2001, 79-83).

The Home and School Library Use

Pupils need to be encouraged to bring school library books home for reading. Also, the home setting should furnish library books from the city library. Gifts given at christmas time and for birthdays may consist, in part, of suitable library books for children. Parents need to read aloud library books to their offspring. The quality of oral reading is very important to capture pupil attention and interest. Pupils also need to read orally to parents as well as parents must read to themselves at home to reveal a role model of the goodness of reading to the self. In supermarkets and other stores, parents may assist children to read labels of shelved items. The point is that parents have a very important role to play in developing proficient and good readers on the part of their offspring.

During parent/teacher times, the former should discuss with the teacher what can be done to help the child to improve in reading in word recognition and in comprehension of ideas. Different techniques and approaches need to be discussed in an atmosphere of trust and respect. Helping pupils to be successful readers and develop a good self concept is vital. The learner needs to be recognized for what has been achieved in reading and to receive recognition for knowledge and skills developed.

A caring teacher and a caring parent are vital when assisting pupils to read better. Concern for the welfare of he child is necessary so that optimal achievement is possible in reading and library use. The school library must have a central position in educational offerings. A positive relationship among/between the home, community and school needs to be there in furnishing reading materials to children. The community has a vital responsibility to provide adequate funding for reading materials and technology in the library. The goal should be to assist children and adults to become better and interested readers in consuming content and subject matter. A literate citizenry is necessary for democracy to thrive and grow, extending to all peoples (Ediger, 1999, 64-70).

A Community of Library Supporters and Readers

All should contribute to develop a community of readers by lending support to developing improved comprehension of

subject matter in school and in society. The community of readers, including library supporters, need to establish challenging objectives for achievement. These objectives need to include the following:

1. increasing the holding of library materials to provide for reading materials of diverse interests and reading levels.
2. providing support in school and in society for those needing help to become literate and in developing optimal literacy.
3. encouragement of reading for vocational and recreational purposes.
4. development of a Reading Holiday Week whereby individuals do more reading and improve reading skills. Mottos and slogans should accompany Reading Holiday Week. Giving of quality books as gifts is to be encouraged.
5. parents and grandparents coming to school and to observe their children read as well as read aloud to small groups of learners. They should also assist with identifying unknown words by pronouncing them as children become stuck in identification of a word.
6. budgeting adequate moneys for library operations and supplies.
7. volunteering to do library work which is conducive to its successful operations.
8. working toward increasing school, community, and library cooperation and integration.
9. establishing quality media relations to notify others of the library and its many services to children and adults.
10. having a major objective, "Lets Do More Reading," in order to read well and achieve more optimally in life's challenges and endeavors.

The community of readers may engage in activities such as the following:

1. a Great Books of the Western World Club to read and discuss the writings of vital classical writers whose writings have stood the test of time and place.
2. a Friends of the LIbrary Club whose role is providing leadership to promote the importance of the school and community library.
3. a Literature Festival for school age pupils which emphasizes the writings of local writers. Local writers may then have a day to show/discuss their literary works appropriate to public/private school age pupils. They might then discuss story content and skills for pupils to acquire. Encouragement and

motivation for pupils to use library resources and do more reading should be an end result.

4. speak at club and organizational meetings on the importance of libraries and reading.

5. stress multicultural reading endeavors to foster good public relations among the races, diverse income groups, and socioeconomic levels (Durboraw, 2001, 58-59). Encouragement of parents, the community, and students to contribute appropriate books to the library for pupil reading must be stressed.

In closing, quality literature read by readers should increase reading skills, knowledge, and literacy.

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